This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS DUBLIN 000066

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: CVIS CMGT PGOV PREL KFRD EI
SUBJECT: BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS IN IRELAND - STATUS REPORT

SENSITIVE

1.(SBU) Summary. Cons Chief met with Deirdre Fannin, the
new project manager for Biometrics in the Passport Office of
the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs to discuss progress
on the development of the e-passport in Ireland. Ms. Fannin
stated that Ireland should make the October 26th deadline
and foresaw no political difficulties with e-passport
production in its current form. She did say that if Ireland
were to eventually incorporate fingerprints into the
biometric chip, this could raise all sorts of political
controversy. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On January 19th, Cons Chief met with Irish Passport
Biometrics Project Manager Deirdre Fannin. Ms. Fannin took
over the position of Project Manager from James O'Connell on
January 4th of this year. Ireland seems to be well on the
way to compliance with the October 26th deadline for
biometric passport production. The request for tender for
the incorporation of biometrics in Irish passports was
released on January 10th, and there have been nineteen
companies that have responded thus far, with eight of them
(four Irish and four non-Irish European) short-listed as
likely candidates. All responses are due by February 20th,
and the GOI hopes to have evaluations done by the St.
Patrick's Day weekend (March 17). This would put them in a
position to begin testing the product by mid-May.

¶3. (U) Ms. Fannin said that the process has built in extra
time for unforeseen delays, so she is confident that the
October 26th deadline will be met, stating that if it is
somehow missed, it would be a question of weeks and not
months. The only difficulty envisioned at this point will
be the timing of the conversion of the passport producing
lines (located in Dublin and Cork), as the period in which
transition would take place would coincide with the summer
travel season, and demand for passports is at an all-time
high (at the Balbriggan production facility outside Dublin,
they have so far seen their highest ever figure for January
passport production).

¶4. (SBU) While the first-generation of e-passports will rely
on facial recognition technology, the request for tender
specifies that chips developed for the passport must also
have the capability of being used for the storage of
fingerprint information (two-prints). Fingerprinting,
however, is a sensitive topic in Ireland, and the GOI is
wary of putting any kind of commitment to eventual
fingerprinting of passport holders in print for fear that
opposition parties would use it to score political points.
Any decisions about fingerprinting would likely be delayed,
therefore, until after the next elections, which are
expected to be in the spring of 2007.

KENNY